

IN MEMORIAM

President of the section of Odontology of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1951 and the Society made him an Honorary Fellow in 1960. In 1948 the University of Durham conferred upon him the degree of M.D.S., and in 1958 the degree of D.Sc. was conferred upon him by the University of McGill and he was made a F.R.C.S. in 1953.

He was awarded the C.B.E. in 1946 and was knighted in the New Year Honours list of 1951.

His all-absorbing hobby was growing carnations, at which he was indeed an expert, and nothing gave him more pleasure than showing his friends around his greenhouses and enlarging upon the beautiful blooms he had raised himself.

The dental profession has lost a great leader who served it well, and we his friends have suffered an overwhelming loss.

He is survived by his wife and son, a member of the medical profession: to them we extend our heart-felt sympathy.

F. C. W.

JAMES JOHNSTON ABRAHAM
C.B.E., D.S.O., M.D., F.R.C.S.
(1876-1963)

THE PASSING OF James Johnston Abraham on 9th August, seven days before his 87th birthday, robs the College of one of its senior Fellows, who had had a very full life as surgeon, soldier, author and publisher.

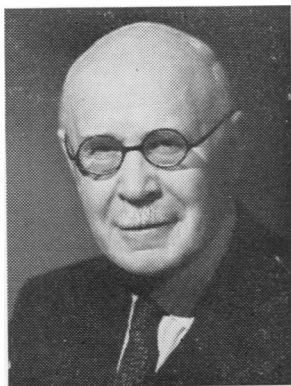
Many of his writings will be enjoyed by multitudes as long as the English language persists. His autobiography, *Surgeon's Journey*, first published in 1957 and twice reprinted in 1958, tells of his early days in Coleraine, Co. Derry, Northern Ireland, where he was born on 16th August 1876, the eldest son of William Abraham, J.P., and the seventh descendant of Thomas Abraham, an officer in Cromwell's Army who settled in Northern Ireland in 1653. On his mother's side he came of Scottish Covenanted stock who settled in Co. Antrim at the time of the Plantation (1611). Originally a Quaker family, at the time of his birth they were Methodist, and his striking personality showed him to be strong and courageous in wartime and made him unusually kind and valuable as a doctor with unbounded personal interest in patients, no matter how high or lowly.

From the Coleraine Grammar School he went to Trinity College, Dublin, in 1894, where Edward Dowden, the Shakespearian scholar, was Professor of Modern Literature and D. J. Cunningham was Professor of Anatomy. There he won prizes in English Literature (B.A., 1898) and was also Gold Medallist in Natural Science.

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He qualified M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O. in 1900, after a year's residence at Steevens Hospital, which experience he used as a background of his novel *The Night Nurse* (1913), which quickly ran through six impressions, was banned by Matrons of all London hospitals except Guy's, and was subsequently filmed in both the U.S.A. and Europe.

He first came to England in 1901, in charge of his College crew at Henley, and with much canvassing and difficulty obtained an appointment as House Surgeon at the West London Hospital to Mr. C. B. Keetley, the founder of the West London Medico-Chirurgical Society and the first Postgraduate Medical School. Other members of the staff were Mr. Stephen Paget, Mr. Swinford Edwards and Mr. McAdam Eccles, and his Irish tact got full play in keeping the peace amongst these widely differing personalities.



Mr. Johnston Abraham.

Johnston Abraham next became House Surgeon to Mr. W. Ernest Miles at the Gordon Hospital and later to Mr. Ernest Lane and Mr. Charles Gibbs at the London Lock Hospital, which was the start of his 45 years' association with that institution.

A voyage to Japan and Java as ship's surgeon, taken as a rest cure, was used four years later to produce *The Surgeon's Log*, of which 31 editions and over half a million copies have been sold.

For his thesis on *The Modern Treatment of Syphilis* using the new work on the spirochaete, the Wassermann reaction and the use of the early arsenicals, he was awarded his M.D.

He decided to take up a surgical career and after post-graduate work at the London Hospital in 1909 obtained the F.R.C.S. England. He put up his plate at 79 Wimpole Street, a hazardous undertaking because there were no well paid junior posts in those days. A year later he was made

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Surgical Registrar at the Lock Hospital and the following year Assistant Surgeon to the Princess Beatrice Hospital.

Comfortably in practice by 1914 he tried to join up, but the War Office refused him a commission on account of his age—36!—but Sir Frederick Treves was instrumental in sending him to Serbia with the No. 1 British Red Cross Mission. The surgery there was the surgery of the Napoleonic wars: amputations, ligaturing arteries, secondary haemorrhages, religaturing, removal of bullets and shrapnel by touch without anaesthetics, but in three months the wards became infected with smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid, relapsing fever and typhus. It was a ghastly experience, described fully in his book *My Balkan Log* (1922). For his work in Serbia he was given the honorary rank of Senior Captain and awarded the Order of St. Sava and the Croix Rouge de Serbie.

He returned to England in 1915 and again with Treves's help joined the R.A.M.C. as Temporary Lieutenant. His Serbian experiences were immediately useful and he was promoted Captain and Surgical Specialist in three months. Next year as Major he was sent to Egypt as Surgical Specialist and second in command of the 24th Stationary Hospital located at Kantara on the Suez Canal, and handled all the casualties from the first and second tragic battles of Gaza.

When the crisis came in August 1916, his 400-bed unit had enough tents to accommodate 1,500 casualties at once. In September 1918 he was appointed A.D.M.S. Palestine Lines of Communication.

Sir Philip Manson-Bahr writes "as one who was particularly benefited and inspired by Johnston Abraham in the first world war from 1917 onwards. He had a colossal task and tackled it with particular zest and originality. His influence with Allenby was great, and he won him to his views, especially on the organization and establishment of malaria-diagnosis stations which accompanied the troops in their forward march from Gaza to Lebanon. Strong and courageous he always backed his juniors. The part he played in war-time he kept up in days of peace. He was indeed a staunch and helpful friend."

On return to civilian life his practice had gone, but he recommenced his work at the Lock and Princess Beatrice Hospitals, as both general surgeon, urologist and venereologist.

In 1920 he married Lilian, daughter of the late Dr. Alexander Francis, and they had one daughter.

He himself thought that his best work was his *Life of Lettsom*, which took four years of hard labour. He became Vice-President of the Medical Society of London—the Society Lettsom had founded—and delivered its Lloyd Roberts lecture in 1948.

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In the mid-thirties he nearly died from duodenal haemorrhage. An operation was very successful, and he lived for some 25 years doing less and less surgery but more and more literary work. In 1937, Cronin's novel *The Citadel* had a disturbing effect on the confidence of the British public in the medical profession, and in an attempt to counteract this he wrote, under the pseudonym of James Harpole, articles and books, *Leaves from a Surgeon's Case-Book*, *The White Coated Army*, *Behind the Surgeon's Mask*, and *A Surgeon's Heritage*, which were also published in America and translated into at least 10 European languages.

By the second world war he was a director of the publishing company of William Heinemann Medical Books, Ltd., and became managing director in 1942. For many years he was the chairman of the Library Committee of the Athenaeum. Those who were privileged to hear his Vicary Lecture at the College in 1943 will always remember the dramatic historical tale he told.

His interest in rare and old books and in medical history made him a valuable trustee of the Hunterian Collection from 1954, and no one could have been more pleased than he was to see the fulfilment of the plans for the rebuilding and reorganization of our unique and valuable collection in the new Museum.

The only sadness in his life of which he ever spoke was his unsuccessful attempt to preserve the continuity of service of the London Lock Hospital.

Seldom has a surgeon had more friends and admirers throughout the world or in the seven seas. I remember landing in a minute island in the South Pacific, and on the quayside being introduced to a business executive who said, "You don't need any introduction. I read all Johnston Abraham's works, and I remember he gave you a write-up, and I feel I know you already."

Seldom has a surgeon contributed more to the scientific side of his specialty, and more rarely still to advancing the esteem of his profession in the eyes of the public.

His millions of friends, and especially his junior colleagues who were associated with him, will never cease to be grateful for the memory of his unflinching courtesy and lovable character.

A. L. A.

TELSTAR BROADCAST

ON WEDNESDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER 1963, the communication satellite Telstar was used to connect an audience in the Royal College of Surgeons with the meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists in Chicago. During the course of the day two panel discussions were relayed across the